

A Special Letter from Lavinia

The following letter is from a parishioner who, along with her husband, came to us from Romania. In the beginning, Lavinia spoke very little English; however, she always lit up the room when she would walk in and soon she was working with the children. We recall a special day when she went with some of us to visit a terminally ill parishioner. While we were playing the piano, singing and praying, Lavinia was kneeling by the parishioner and holding her hand. Little did any of us know that in a few short months, Lavinia, herself, would be diagnosed with a fast-spreading cancer. With only a short time left on this earth, Lavinia and Florin returned to Romania to be with their daughter and family. It was then she sent us this touching letter:

Our dearest friends,

This is the third Sunday we are not able to attend the weekly service and be a part of Mayhew Baptist Church. At least not in person.

We didn't have the chance to properly say good bye to our brothers and sisters in faith. We miss you deeply and we are trying to find a way to tell you how much you mean for us.

I remember well the first day we stepped in. I was kind of shy, nervous and definitely confused, as my English is far from perfection today, then I only was able to get 70% of all the talking around. But it didn't take us long to get comfortable and everything went on naturally, like we had known you for decades.

Smile is the same in all languages, love doesn't need many words and faith goes beyond words. After all, God knows all our thoughts and feelings before we are aware of them and put them in words. Well, faith, love and smiles are the main features of our congregation. You are such warm and welcoming people as that you make it easy for any newcomer and soon the church became our home away from home. Actually, this is how things should be: no matter how far you are from home, how lost or lonely you feel, if you walked in a church then you get home.

For two years we found peace and serenity, answers to our questions and doubts, we made friends and we had fun. We felt loved and we tried to give love in return. I found such joy in working with the children and teenagers. I don't know how much I taught them but I am sure they taught me priceless lessons about love and sincerity, fairness and selflessness. I got support, inspiration and advice from the best teachers.

At the moment we learned that I am sick, our world got shaken. Everything seemed to be fine and it was the moment to be optimistic about the future and make plans. The biggest the shock. And then you stepped in once again. We got so many calls, touching cards, visits, encouragement words, smiles and hugs. Each one of them gave us another reason to keep up hope, find the power to fight and if this is what was decided for me, to find peace

Thank you all and each one of you. In hard times it's so comforting to know that you are loved and someone is thinking of you and praying for you I cannot describe it into words. God works through you. We are now in our home country, Romania, because I want to spend the time that I have left (long or short, only God knows) with our daughter and her family. My thoughts and prayers are still with you. I hope we'll meet again. God bless you!

With love and deepest gratitude,

Lavinia and Florin Penica